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MONTANA PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION

P.O. Box 511 Choteau, MT 59422

"Envisioning healthy people in healthy communities throughout Montana"

February 9, 2007

Hon. Diane Rice, Judiciary Committee Chair
Judiciary Committee Members
State of Montana House of Representatives
Helena, MT 59620

Re: Support for HB 534—an act requiring the use of a motorcycle helmet to operate a motorcycle or quadricycle

Dear Representative Rice and House Judiciary Committee Members,

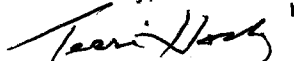
The Montana Public Health Association (MPHA) encourages your support of HB 534—an act requiring the use of a motorcycle helmet to operate a motorcycle or quadricycle. We appreciate Representative Ron Erickson for sponsoring the bill. According to the American Public Health Association (APHA), helmets are the single most effective means of preventing a head injury that can lead to death or permanent disability. APHA states that the passage of helmet laws has been found to be the most effective method of increasing helmet use, and when states abandon or weaken mandatory helmet laws, deaths go up.

Motorcyclists are especially at high risk of being involved in a serious accident. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) estimates that per mile driven, motorcyclists are 34 times more likely to die in a traffic accident than people driving or riding in a car. According to NHTSA, helmets are estimated to be 37 percent more effective in preventing fatal injuries, and in 2005, helmets saved the lives of 1,546 motorcyclists. The lives of an additional 728 motorcyclists could have been saved by helmets. Helmets also protect against traumatic brain injuries, which can result in multiple surgeries and years of rehabilitation. How much money is spent for the surgeries and rehabilitation? What is the amount of money lost due to the person's inability to work? Please consider those questions.

The Montana Public Health Association (MPHA) is a diverse membership of individuals and organizations advocating for optimal public health best practice standards for all Montanans. MPHA facilitates educational and professional growth opportunities, networking and mentoring, and collaborative relationships for members and partners. MPHA joins with other organizations on specific issues to strengthen the voice of public health and advance legislation to support the people of Montana.

Thank you for your consideration of HB 534 and for Representative Erickson's sponsorship. Our organization looks forward to working with you on this and other important public health initiatives in the future. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Lora Wier, MPHA Past President, MPHA Advocacy Committee Chair, at (406) 466-2562 or health@3rivers.net, or visit the MPHA website at www.mtpha.com

Sincerely,



Terri Hocking
President

Cc: Representative Ron Erickson